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Legislation restricting medicine sales passes Senate

LANSING – Legislation passed the Senate today that would restrict the sale of products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine at pharmacies and grocery stores, Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, announced.

Under Senate Bill 189, all stores that sell pseudoephedrine as the sole active ingredient would be allowed to sell two packages a day, with exceptions for liquids and pediatric products. Buyers would have to show photo I.D., be 18 years or older and sign a log with name, address and purchase information. Products included in the legislation would have to be kept behind a counter or within 20 feet of a counter. A sign would be posted stating the law.

“We need to be proactive in dealing with the ever-increasing and spreading meth problem in Michigan,” said Birkholz, sponsor of the bill. “We think that the small inconvenience for the customer and store owners will help stop the flow of meth in our communities. In the nine months since similar legislation passed in Oklahoma there has been a 70-percent reduction in meth labs.”

Between 1996 and now there has been a 181-percent increase in meth labs in Michigan. In 1996, six meth labs were found and investigated in Michigan; in 2003 there were 265 labs.

“We are committed to protecting Michigan’s families and law enforcement agents from the dangerous process involved in the manufacture of methamphetamine,” Birkholz said. “Because meth cannot be made without ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, we anticipate seeing an immediate and significant drop in meth labs across the state once this legislation is enacted.”

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant and has harmful effects on both users and their families. Chronic abuse can lead to psychotic behavior, including intense paranoia, hallucinations and out-of-control rages. The chemicals used to make it are highly explosive in nature and have an extreme toxicity level that can permanently contaminate all surroundings.

(More)

Due to the toxic waste produced in the production process, meth labs are considered hazardous waste sites. Toxic waste produced in meth lab sites (i.e. homes, cars, trailers, trucks, hotels) can pollute dwellings, soil and water supplies. For every pound of meth produced, five to six pounds of toxic waste is produced. This waste is almost always illegal dumped.

SB 189 is based on a similar law in Oklahoma. Officials there have seen a 70-percent drop in methamphetamine production and meth lab seizures. A bill similar to Oklahoma's is being pushed in the United States Senate and Congress.

More than a dozen states already have enacted legislation restricting access to meth-making cold medicines. Target Corp., Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Kmart Holding Corp., CVS Corp., Albertson's Inc., Rite Aid Corp. and Walgreen Co. all have announced they will move medications with pseudoephedrine behind pharmacy counters.

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